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ABSTRACT

This brief paper presents data on Puerto Rican women residing in the United States as of March of 1975. Information on population, age, marital status, household and family head, labor force participation, work experience, occupational, and income statistics is included. (Author/BS)

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WOMEN OF PUERTO RICAN ORIGIN
in the Continental United States

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Population

There were 906,000 women of Puerto Rican origin in the continental United States in March 1975.1/ These women accounted for 16 percent of all women of Spanish origin but for only 1 percent of the total female population. They were 54 percent of the total Puerto Rican-origin population.

Geographically, persons of Puerto Rican origin are heavily concentrated in the New York-New Jersey area. Three out of five Puerto Ricans reside in New York City.

Age

The median age of all Puerto Rican-origin women in March 1975 was 21.9 years. Fifty-five percent of the women were in the 18- to 64-year-age group, compared with 54 percent among all Spanish-origin women. A very large proportion (44 percent) of Puerto Rican women were under 18, but only about 2 percent were 65 and over.

Marital Status

Of the 590,000 Puerto Rican-origin women 14 years of age and over, 62 percent were married. Twenty-seven percent were single, 5 percent were widowed, and 6 percent divorced.

1/ For an in-depth commentary on various aspects of Puerto Ricans, see "Puerto Ricans in the Continental United States: An Uncertain Future," a report of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Washington, D.C., October 1976.

Note.--Data in this fact sheet are from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census: "Persons of Spanish Origin in the United States, March 1975," P-20, No. 290, February 1976.

Persons of Puerto Rican origin were determined on the basis of a question that asked for self-identification of origin or descent. Persons of Spanish origin indicated their origin as either Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or some other Spanish origin.

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Household and Family Heads

In March 1975, 38 percent of the 477,000 Puerto Rican heads of households were women, compared with 23 percent of all Spanish-origin household heads.

Of all families of Puerto Rican origin, 35 percent were headed by women, compared with 18 percent of all Spanish-origin families. Among all U.S. families, 12 percent were headed by women.

Labor Force Participation

Thirty-four percent of Puerto Rican-origin women 16 years of age and over were in the labor force in March 1975, a considerably lower proportion than that of all Spanish-origin women (42 percent) and women of all races (40 percent). Of all Puerto Rican women workers, 15 percent were unemployed, compared with 12 percent of all Spanish-origin women and 10 percent of all women workers.

Work Experience

Puerto Rican women were the least likely of all Spanish-origin women to have had work experience in 1970 (latest data available). Thirty-four percent of Puerto Rican wives and only 24 percent of the female family heads worked at some time in 1970, as compared with 42 and 47 percent, respectively, of all Spanish-origin women.

Occupations

Puerto Rican-origin women were heavily concentrated in operative jobs (including transport) in March 1975 (29 percent). Smaller proportions were clerical workers (26 percent) and service workers inside and outside the home (22 percent). Comparatively, all Spanish-origin women were more evenly distributed among the same three occupations, with 27 percent employed as operatives, including transport; 29 percent as clerical workers; and 24 percent as service workers.

The occupational distribution of both Puerto Rican women and all women of Spanish origin was markedly different from that of all women. Among all women, the largest proportions were clerical workers (35 percent), service workers (22 percent), and professional and technical workers (16 percent).

Employment of Women 16 Years of Age and Over, by Major Occupation Group and Ethnic Origin, March 1975

Major occupation group	All women	Spanish-origin women	Puerto Rican-origin women
Total employed	33,025,000	1,299,000	157,000
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Professional, technical workers	16.2	7.3	10.4
Managers, administrators (except farm)	5.1	2.9	1.7
Sales workers	6.9	5.5	3.5
Clerical workers	35.3	28.9	26.3
Craft workers	1.5	2.4	5.9
Operatives (including transport)	11.3	26.8	28.7
Nonfarm laborers	1.0	1.5	1.0
Farmers and farm managers	.2	--	--
Farm laborers and supervisors	.7	.8	1.1
Service workers (including private household)	21.9	24.0	21.6

Income

For all Puerto Rican-origin women 14 years of age and over who reported income in 1974, the median income was $3,889. For all women of Spanish origin, it was $3,072.

Poverty

About 33 percent of persons of Puerto Rican origin had incomes below the low-income level 2/ in 1974, compared with 23 percent of all persons of Spanish origin. The proportion of Puerto Rican persons with low incomes was substantially higher than that for whites (19 percent) yet considerably lower than that for blacks (41 percent).

2/ The low-income or poverty level is based on the Bureau of the Census definition of poverty, adjusted annually in accordance with changes in the Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index. Classified as poor in 1975 were those nonfarm households where total money income was less than $2,724 for an unrelated individual; $3,506 for a couple; and $5,500 for a family of four. The poverty level for farm families is set at 85 percent of the corresponding level for nonfarm families.

The likelihood of being poor was very high for families headed by women and for women classified as unrelated individuals.3/ More than three-fifths (62 percent) of Puerto Rican persons and more than half of all persons of Spanish origin so situated were poor in 1974.

3/ Unrelated individuals are persons who are not living with any relatives.

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